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Regional centres and coastal areas growing fastest

Regional centres and coastal areas dominated the list of fastest growing districts in Victoria, bucking the State trend which saw the population of country Victoria as a whole growing more slowly than Melbourne, according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Aside from the City of Melbourne, the fastest growing areas in the state were on the fringes of Melbourne (Cities of Casey and Hume, and Shire of Melton) and the coastal areas of Surf Coast and Bass Coast. The regional cities of Warrnambool, Mildura, Wodonga and Echuca have all grown more rapidly than the Melbourne average over the year ending June 1999.

The information is contained in an ABS snapshot of regional Victoria for 1999, which was launched by the Minister for State and Regional Development, Hon. John Brumby at a luncheon in Bendigo today.

"This information will assist Victorian Government, business and the people of rural and regional Victoria to make informed decisions about development across the state and in smaller communities," said Mr Brumby.

The ABS publication contains comparative key social and economic conditions for regional Victoria including income, expenditure, leisure activities, use of health and education facilities, local government accounts, water use, environmental expenditure, performance of key industries, demographic information and climate.

Accompanying the ABS publication is a series of 2001 Regional Profiles for Victoria. The profiles contain statistical information for each of South-Western Victoria, Western Victoria, Northern Victoria, North-Eastern Victoria and Gippsland.

Highlights from the publication include:

- Across Victoria, 66% of students were enrolled in government schools. This figure was higher in non-metropolitan areas and lower in cities.
- Country police districts generally experienced lower criminal offence rates than those in the metropolitan districts with five of the six country police districts having rates lower than all but three of the metropolitan districts.
- More than half the population living in Melbourne (52%) were in a \$700 or more income range compared to 36% of those from country Victoria.
- Netball was the only spectator sport that was more popular in the country than the city.
- Regional Victoria spent \$4.57 per capita on environmental protection compared to \$2.74 in Melbourne. Warrnambool spent more than 16 times the State average.

Further details are available in **Regional Statistics, Victoria** (cat. no. 1362.2) available from ABS Bookshops. A summary of the main findings can be found on this site.

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